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## **'We just wanted children': Satsuma couple adopt six children of different races, some with disabilities**

SATSUMA – Donna Casady always wanted to be a mother. So when she and her husband, Edward, discovered they weren't able to have children, they decided to adopt.

Thus far, the couple have adopted six children, ranging in age from 2 to 12. Adopted as babies, the siblings are a variety of races and nationalities. The oldest is biracial, while the others are Chinese, Haitian, black, Guatemalan, and white. The two youngest children also have disabilities.

"We wanted children," said Casady. "We didn't care if they had disabilities or what race they were. We just wanted children."

Three-year-old Lydia, the second youngest, is from Guatemala. She has Hanhart syndrome, a rare birth defect that resulted in her being born without hands, one leg, and a lower jaw. Her younger brother, Jacob, has spina bifida and was born with club feet.

Both children receive services from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. Lydia attends Orthopedic Clinic, Seating and Positioning Clinic, and Feeding Clinic through the department's Children's Rehabilitation Service ( CRS ) division. She also attends CRS ' Augmentative Communication Technology ( ACT ) Clinic, where a team of specialists has been working on selecting a device that will help her communicate. CRS also assisted with the purchase of a power wheelchair for the youngster.

Jacob also attends several CRS clinics, including Spina Bifida Clinic, Urology Clinic, and Orthopedic Clinic. In addition, CRS staff assisted in the purchase of a stander so that the young boy can walk.

Casady said she is grateful for CRS ' assistance.

" CRS has done a lot for my family," she said. "I like that I can call or email the staff with any questions. They are very knowledgeable and always encouraging."

Despite their disabilities, Casady said she is optimistic about Lydia and Jacob's future.

"Our dream is for them to be happily married and have many children," she said.

Casady said she thinks having a diverse family is beneficial to all of her children.

"It teaches them to accept differences," she said.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is the state agency whose mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.